

ABATED AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE FALL HAZARD

The U.S. Navy and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) require that workers be given and use safeguards such as guard rails, platforms, or fall arrest systems wherever the workers must work at heights that are more than six feet from the ground or floor. Fall arrest systems must have three components – a secure anchor, a body support for the worker, and a method for connecting the fall arrest system to the aircraft or structure that he or she is working on so that, if the worker does fall, the fall will be interrupted in mid-air.

The aircraft maintenance activity abatement log is a required element of Naval Air Station (NAS) Willow Grove's Safety and Health Program. It serves as a record of safety problems and tracks corrective actions taken to reduce or eliminate the safety hazard. When the log showed that as many as ten workers at NAS Willow Grove were at risk of falling from elevated work areas while performing maintenance on top of Navy P-3 aircraft in an aircraft hangar, the safety manager took action to fix the problem. He requested that Hazard Abatement funds be provided through the Chief of Naval Operations' Hazard Abatement Program.



Fall Arrest System and P-3 Aircraft in Hangar 175, NAS Willow Grove

The NAS Willow Grove elevated work area problem was reviewed at the May 1999 annual board meeting of the Naval Facilities Engineering Command where workplace hazards are reviewed and prioritized for fixing using Hazard Abatement Program funds. As a result, Hazard Abatement funds were approved to install a fall arrest system at NAS Willow Grove.

The Resident Officer in Charge of Construction for NAS Willow Grove supervised the design and construction of the fall arrest system, shown above, in Hangar 175 to prevent workers from falling while working on P-3 aircraft in the hangar